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CIA is misused, former agent claims

STAT

By JOAN TREADWAY

Victor Marchetti has gone from being a spy to being spied upon.

The one-time CIA official, now an object of the agency's surveillance, still believes the organization has an important function.

"We have to know what's going on in our world, particularly when it's a potential threat to us — like the communist areas," he said Friday in New Orleans. "We need to collect information, analyze it, and provide policy-makers with the best thinking possible."

But the agency should not be used to start wars in Central America or Vietnam, fight wars in Africa, prop up dictators in the Middle East or to benefit big business or political interests, as has happened, he said.

The difference between what he

believes the CIA should be and what it is, he said, caused him to resign from it in 1969 after a nearly 15-year career.

Marchetti then wrote a controversial, critical book about the agency, "The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence," which the agency promptly censored. After several court battles, there are still blank spots in the book, but they are getting fewer with each successive edition, the author said.

The censored material contains nothing that has not already been made public over the years, said Marchetti.

He is in town for a seminar on spying sponsored by the American Civil Liberties Union and other groups. It begins at 12:45 p.m. Saturday at Tulane Business School.

The CIA has done much good in intelligence-gathering, but also has gotten into highly questionable activi-

ties such as interfering in the affairs of other governments, he said. Such interference is counterproductive to this country and does not advance democracy, he said.

Marchetti criticized CIA involvement in Central America, particularly the agency's support of Nicaraguan rebels.

"If the president wants to muck about in Central America, he doesn't need the CIA to do it," he said.

An "above board" military operation that has been approved by both Congress and the American public would be a better way to handle a foreign power perceived to be a threat to the United States, he said.

"The CIA should be basically a defensive organization, a shield, a first-line of defense for this country," Marchetti said.

Marchetti lives near Washington, D.C., spending his time lecturing and writing. He is working on a "fun book on the CIA, a kind of fluff piece," he said.

It will include a section on the diverse types of people the agency has recruited, ranging from doctors of philosophy to Las Vegas croupiers, he said.

After his first book, the agency started following him around, even trailing his wife to church, he said. "They couldn't understand that I had just turned off (to the agency); they thought I was either a KGB agent or about to be a KGB agent."

He predicted his new book will not cause such a strong reaction. "They finally have come to understand I'm straight; we have a polite but cool relationship."